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Sullivan Stapleton

Sullivan Stapleton (born 14 June 1977)[1] is an Australian actor who is best known for his roles in the television series *The Secret Life of Us*, *Strike Back* and *Blindspot*. He also starred in the film *Animal Kingdom* and played the lead role, Greek leader Themistocles, in the film *300: Rise of an Empire* (2014).[2]

Sullivan Stapleton

Stapleton in 2013

Born	14 June 1977[1] Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Education	Sandringham Secondary College St. Martins Theatre
Occupation	Actor
Years active	1994–present
Known for	Kurt Weller in *Blindspot*

Early life and education

Stapleton was born in Melbourne, Victoria.[3] He was eight years old when he and his younger sister, actress Jacinta Stapleton, six at the time, joined an acting and modelling agency. The idea first came to their aunt who signed her own children with the agency. She then asked her nephew and niece if they would like to join and their mother signed them. Stapleton's younger brother Joshua also launched into acting, dance and musical theatre as a child.[4][5]

Stapleton's picture caught the attention of a director who invited him to be in his short film. Pleased by his performance, the director said he was gifted and encouraged him to pursue acting.[5]

Stapleton received training at Melbourne's St. Martins Theatre. He studied drama and theatre at Sandringham Secondary College (in Sandringham, Victoria, Australia).[6]

Career

Stapleton launched his career in Australia.[6] He got his actors' union card at the age of 9 and at 11 he started working in ads.[7] Stapleton's first onscreen acting performance was in the 1994 Australian TV movie *Baby Bath Massacre* as Adrian.[6][8] Between acting jobs, Stapleton performed several types of work: modelling, cleaning animal cages in a pet shop, and working as a grip in many films and TV productions. In 1995, Sullivan appeared in *Blue Heelers* for one episode, and again in 2003 for 3 episodes. He also worked on *The Elephant Princess*, *Rush*, *Tangle*)[7] in front and behind the camera, working on building sites, and assisting carpenters.[5][6][7][9][10]

Before landing a role as Josh Hughes in Australian soap opera *Neighbours* in 1998, Sullivan appeared in a string of little-seen features and homegrown dramas.[8] Other notable roles include Justin Davies in the Australian television series *The Secret Life of Us* between 2003 and 2005,[11] Fearless in 2007 film *December Boys*, special agent Wilkins in 2007 American action film *The Condemned*.[12] But it was with Stapleton's performance in the Academy Award-nominated film *Animal Kingdom*, which premiered at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, that he made an international breakthrough.[5][8][11]

When *Animal Kingdom* won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival interest in him sparked on two continents[7] and his career has taken him across the globe.[9] He made his second appearance in *Underbelly*, an Australian true crime drama television series, this time as the lead character, Colin McLaren in *Underbelly Files: Infiltration*. This was an endurance test for Stapleton and the first challenging shoot of his career.[7] Previously he played Pat Barbaro in an episode of *Underbelly*.[7][9]

From 2011, off the back of *Animal Kingdom*, Stapleton began a main role as Damien Scott in *Strike Back*, a British action thriller series based on the 2007 novel of the same name by novelist and former SAS soldier Chris Ryan.[13][14][15] During his tenure on the series, he landed a role in his first American film, 2013's *Gangster Squad*, with Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone, Sean Penn and Josh Brolin.[13][14] That same year, he was honoured with a Breakthrough Award at an exclusive Australians in Film Benefit Dinner held in Los Angeles.[16]

In early 2014, while Stapleton was in Thailand for the filming of *Strike Back*, on a night out in Bangkok after work, he fell off a tuk-tuk and suffered a head injury that left him in a coma.[17] He was resuscitated by former UFC Middleweight Champion Michael Bisping, with whom he had been spending his night out.[18] Shooting for the show was paused for six months to allow his full recovery. Airing of the fifth season was also pushed to 2015.[19][20] In 2014, Stapleton also starred as the lead character, Greek general Themistocles in American epic historical action film *300: Rise of an Empire*, opposite Eva Green, Lena Headey and David Wenham.[21]

For five seasons, from 2015 until its end in 2020, Stapleton starred opposite Jaimie Alexander in American crime series, *Blindspot*, as FBI agent, Kurt Weller.[22][23] Between filming the pilot and the ongoing series, Sullivan flew to Berlin to film his role as SEAL team leader Matt Barnes in 2017 action film *American Renegades*.[24] He next appeared in 2019 biographical sports drama *Ride Like a Girl*, alongside Teresa Palmer and Rachel Griffiths, in which he played horse trainer Darren Weir.[25]

In 2022, Stapleton had a lead role in *After the Verdict*, a six-part Australian comedy drama television series on Nine Network, playing the role of Daniel, opposite Lincoln Younes and Magda Szubanski.[26]

Awards

Year	Work	Award	Category	Result	Ref.
2010	*Animal Kingdom*	Australian Film Institute Award	Best Supporting Actor	Nominated	[6]
2011		Chlotrudis Award	Best Performance by an Ensemble Cast	Nominated	[6]
2013	Sullivan Stapleton	Australians in Film	Breakthrough Award	Honoured	[16]
2015	*Cut Snake*	AACTA Award	Best Lead Actor	Nominated	[6][27]
2016		Australian Film Critics Association Award	Best Actor	Nominated	[6][28]
		Film Critics Circle of Australia Award	Best Actor	Nominated	[6][28]
		TLA Gaybie Award	Best Supporting Actor in a Gay Role	Nominated	[6]
2020		AACTA Award	Best Indie Film	Nominated	[6]

Filmography

Film

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1996	*River Street*	Chris	
1998	*Amy*	Wayne Lassiter	
2000	*Bored Olives* (aka *City Loop*)	Dom	
2003	*Darkness Falls*	Officer Matt Henry	
2004	*Everything Goes*	Jack	Short film
2007	*The Condemned*	Special Agent Brad Wilkins	
	The Bloody Sweet Hit	Carl	Short film
	December Boys	Fearless	
2010	*Animal Kingdom*	Craig Cody	Nominated – AACTA Award for Best Actor in a Supporting Role
	Centre Place	James Ballintyne	
2011	*The Hunter*	Doug	
2013	*Gangster Squad*	Jack Whalen	
2014	*300: Rise of an Empire*	Themistocles	
	Kill Me Three Times	Nathan Webb	
	Cut Snake	Pommie	Nominated – AACTA Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role Nominated – Australian Film Critics Association Award for Best Actor Nominated – FCCA Award for Best Actor
2017	*Renegades*	Matt Barnes	[29]
2019	*Ride Like a Girl*	Darren Weir	
2020	*A Sunburnt Christmas*	Dingo	
2026	*The Internship*	Nelson	
2026	*Runner* †	Josh	Post-production

Television

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1994	*Baby Bath Massacre*	Adrian	TV movie
1995; 2003	*Blue Heelers*	Ian Shannon / Gethin Fox / Anthony Hood	3 episodes: "Second Innings"; "Father's Day: Part 1&2"; "Victims"
1997	*Good Guys Bad Guys*	Paul Morello	Episode: "A Bilby in Rat's Clothing"
1997–1998	*State Coroner*	'Bullbar' Benson / Darren Pyke	2 episodes: "Sunday in the Country", "Final Approach"
1998	*Raw FM*	Bucky	Episode: "Raw'n'Sore"
	Neighbours	Josh Hughes	Recurring role; 10 episodes
	The Genie from Down Under 2	Surfer #2	Episode: "The Cold Shoulder"
	Halifax f.p.	Hamish	Episode: "Afraid of the Dark"
1999	*Witch Hunt*	Craig Thomas	TV movie
	Pig's Breakfast		TV series
	Stingers	Matt Wilmott	Episode: "Dance with the Dragon"
2000	*Something in the Air*	Wayne Taylor	4 episodes: "The Best Man", "The Things We Do", "The Big Match", "Return of the Prodigal"
	Green Sails	Infante	TV movie
2001	*My Brother Jack*	Young Joe	TV movie
2002	*MDA*	Ben Quilty	2 episodes: "Rites of Passage", "One Small Step"
2003–2005	*The Secret Life of Us*	Justin Davies	Main role; 24 episodes
2005	*Little Oberon*	Martin	TV movie
2006	*McLeod's Daughters*	Drew Cornwell	Episode: "Winners & Losers"
2007–2009	*Satisfaction*	Josh	Recurring role; 13 episodes
2008	*Underbelly*	Pat Barbaro	Episode: "Suffer the Children"
	Canal Road	Jack Logan	3 episodes
	Rush	Yuri	Episode 12
2009	*Carla Cametti PD*	Matt Brodie	Recurring role; 6 episodes
	Sea Patrol	Geoff Kershaw	Episode: "Guns"
2010	*The Odds*	Wade	TV movie
	Lowdown	Oliver Barry	Episode: "Bonk Bonk, Who's There?"
2011	*Underbelly Files: Infiltration*	Colin McLaren	Main role; TV movie
2011–2018	*Strike Back*	Sgt. Damien Scott	Main role; 42 episodes

Year	Title	Role	Notes
2015–2020	*Blindspot*	Kurt Weller	Main role; 100 episodes
2022	*After the Verdict*	Daniel	Main role; 6 episodes

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